

Message Text

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SUBJECT: GERMAN VIEWS ON ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: A) BONN 530 (NOTAL), B) BONN 553 (NOTAL), C) BONN 543

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED. EMBASSY WELCOMES GERMAN CONCERN OVER THE DETERIORATING ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE FACT THAT GERMAN LEADERS ARE GIVING CONSIDERATION TO THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY CAN EXPRESS THEIR ANXIETIES AT SIGNS THAT THE COMMUNISTS MIGHT BE GIVEN A LARGE VOICE IN THE GOVERNING OF THE COUNTRY. GERMAN EMBASSY ROME SHARE'S CONCERN BUT IN THE FACE OF STRONG ANTI-GERMAN SENTIMENT IN ITALY NURTURED BY THE KAPPLER ESCAPE AND THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE SUICIDES OF THE BAADER-MEINHOF PRISONERS IT FEELS THAT A PUBLIC FRG EXPRESSION OF CONCERN AT THIS TIME WWOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. WE SHARE THIS ASSESSMENT IN SO FAR AS IT RELATES TO A FRG STATEMENT, BUT WE BELIEVE GERMAN POLITICAL PARTIES IN THEIR DIRECT CONTACTS WITH THEIR ITALIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIALIST COUNTERPARTS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO SET FORTH PRIVATELY

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THE VIEW THAT THEY WOULD NOT LOOK FAVORABLY TOWARD ANY MOVE WHICH WOULD INCREASE THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNISTS IN THE ITALIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

1. WE WELCOME THE GERMAN CONCERN, REFLECTED IN REFTELS, OVER THE DETERIORATING ITALIAN POLITICAL

SITUATION. AT THE SAME TIME, THE EMBASSY VIEWS POSITIVELY THE FACT THAT GERMAN LEADERS ARE GIVING THOUGHT TO THE MANNER IN WHICH THEY CAN MOST EFFECTIVELY EXPRESS THEIR ANXIETIES.

2. DURING LUNCH WITH EMBOFF JANUARY 11, FRG EMBASSY EMBOFF NOTED HIS EMBASSY'S CONCERN OVER THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION. HE NOTED THAT HIS EMBASSY HAS BEEN PROVIDING A STEADY STREAM OF REPORTING TO BONN ON DEVELOPMENTS HERE, ALTHOUGH HE OBSERVED THAT IT HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY FEEDBACK FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. (HE ALSO STATED THAT THE EMBASSY WAS IN THE DARK ON WHAT IF ANYTHING HAD BEEN SAID BETWEEN SCHMIDT AND ANDREOTTI ON THE "COMMUNIST QUESTION" DURING THEIR DECEMBER 1 MEETING AT VERONA.) SOURCE ADDED THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO RECENT EXCHANGES BETWEEN HIS EMBASSY AND SENIOR DC LEADERS (GOVERNMENT OR PARTY) DURING WHICH FRG CONCERN HAD BEEN EXPRESSED.

3. REGARDING A POSSIBLE FRG PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF CONCERN ABOUT THE GROWING COMMUNIST ROLE, OUR SOURCE STATED THAT HIS AMBASSADOR STRONGLY OPPOSES SUCH A MOVE AS BEING COUNTERPRODUCTIVE. THE AMBASSADOR'S THINKING IS STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THE ANTI-GERMAN MOOD IN ITALY WHICH HAS BEEN NURTURED IN RECENT
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MONTHS BY THE KAPPLER ESCAPE AND BY THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE SUICIDES OF THE BAADER-MEINHOF PRISONERS. GIVEN THE COMPLICATED NATURE OF THE FRG-ITALIAN RELATIONSHIP, THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR REPORTEDLY BELIEVES THAT A PUBLIC FRG EXPRESSION OF CONCERN AT THIS TIME WOULD LEAD TO A STRONG AND EMOTIONAL OUTCRY ABOUT GERMAN INTERFERENCE IN ITALIAN AFFAIRS.

4. THE FRG EMBASSY IS NOT AWARE OF ANY RECENT CONTACTS BETWEEN GERMAN PARTY LEADERS AND THEIR ITALIAN COUNTERPARTS. IT IS THE EMBASSY'S IMPRESSIONS THAT THESE HAVE TAPERED OFF SOMEWHAT FOLLOWING THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY BEFORE AND AFTER THE 1976 ITALIAN NATIONAL ELECTIONS. HOWEVER, OUR SOURCE DID NOT RULE OUT THAT THESE ARE TAKING PLACE, SINCE THEY OFTEN OCCUR WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS EMBASSY.

5. COMMENT. AS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY POINTED OUT, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR ALLIES SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO PLAY A ROLE IN SEEKING TO AVERT A FURTHER DRIFT TO THE LEFT IN ITALY, AND IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT WE VIEW POSITIVELY THAT FACT THAT FRG IS GIVING SERIOUS

STUDY TO WHAT IT CAN DO. AT THE SAME TIME WE CONCUR
IN THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR'S VIEW THAT A FORMAL AND
PUBLIC FRG EXPRESSION OF CONCERN AT THIS MOMENT COULD
WELL BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND EVEN DAMAGING TO THE
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC EFFORT TO FEND OFF THE
PRESSURES FROM THE COMMUNISTS FOR INCLUSION IN
A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY. WE BELIEVE
THAT GERMANS COULD MOVE MOST EFFECTIVELY THROUGH
PRIVATE REPRESENTATIONS ON A PARTY TO PARTY BASIS,
AND WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO
UNDERTAKE SUCH INITIATIVES AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE
TIME. HOLMES

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